THE EXPEDIENCY OF A Publick Liturgy, To Preserve the REVERENCE OF *PUBLICK WORSHIP*: IN A SERMON PREACH'D at *BRIDGEWATER*, FOR THE Satisfaction of an Eminent DISSENTER.

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1 Cor. 14. ult. *Let all things be done decently, and in Order.*

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A SERMON ON PSALM lxxxix. 7.

God is greatly to be feared in the Assemblies of his Saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are round about him.

THESE Words are a brief Direction how to behave our selves in the House and Presence of God; which we are here told, must be with Fear and Reverence. The occasion of them was from the *Psalmist*'s deep and serious Contemplation of the Works of God; together with those glorious Attributes and Perfections, that shine so brightly in them: The Meditation whereof fill'd his Heart with Joy, and his Mouth with the Praises of his Maker. The *Psalm* begins with a Song in Praise of his Goodness; *My Song shall be always of the loving Kindness of the Lord; with my Mouth will I shew forth his Truth, from one Generation to another.* Vers. 1. And after some remarkable instances of it, he breaks out in Admiration of his Greatness, saying, *The Heavens shall praise his wondrous Works, and the Earth shall sound forth the Glory of his Power.* Vers. 5. In a word, the infinite Wisdom, Bounty, Truth, and Faithfulness of God appear'd in such lively Colours, stamp'd

upon all the Works of his Hands, that made him in the
Verſ. 6. Verſe before the Text to cry out, *Who in the Heavens can be compar'd unto the Lord? or what is he among the gods that can be liken'd unto him?* And then, to imprint the greater awe and dread of him upon our Minds, he adds theſe words, *God is greatly to be feared in the Aſſemblies of his Saints, and to be had in Reverence of all that draw nigh to him.*

The Senſe of which Words, I ſhall briefly ſumm up and handle in this plain *Propoſition*; viz.

That all our Addreſſes to the Divine Majeſty muſt be accompanied with a Holy Fear and Reverence: *God is greatly to be fear'd*, &c.

In treating of this Propoſition, I ſhall not need to inſiſt much upon the proof of it: For the bare Light of Nature will teach us, that the Worſhip of God is to be perform'd with the greateſt Solemnity and Reverence.

For this being the Homage we are to pay to the Supream Being, or the juſt Acknowledgment we owe to our great Creator, *Reaſon* wills that it be done with all imaginable Deference and Humility: And ſince we receive and expect all from him, 'twill farther teach us, that the profoundeſt Reverence and Veneration we can pay to him, muſt come vaſtly ſhort of his infinite Excellencies and Perfections.

But if the Light of *Nature* and *Reaſon* were more dim and defective in this Point, than it is, The Light of *Scripture* would abundantly ſupply it: for there we read many clear and expreſs Precepts to this purpoſe.

The Royal *Pſalmiſt*, in our Text, makes this to be a Tribute due to the infinite Greatneſs and Glory of our Maker; *God is greatly to be feared*, ſaith he, *in the Aſſemblies of his Saints, and to be had in reverence of all that draw nigh to him.* And therefore he calls upon the greateſt Perſons, even the Princes and Potentates of the Earth, to
Pſal. 2. *ſerve the Lord with fear*, and to *rejoyce before him with trembling.*

bling. Yea, we find God Almighty challenging this Homage from us: *If I be a Father, where is my Honour? if I be a Maſter, where is my Fear? ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.* Mal. 1. 6. And elſewhere he threatens the Neglect, and encourages the Performance of this Duty: *Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that deſpiſe me, ſhall be lightly eſteem'd.* 1 Sam. 2. 30.

In the *New Teſtament* we are call'd upon to *ſerve God acceptably, with reverence, and godly fear:* Implying, that our Service cannot be acceptable, unleſs it be attended with theſe things. Heb. 12. 28.

I ſhall therefore take this for granted, as a Matter wherein we are all agreed, that God is to be ſerv'd with Reverence and godly Fear. The great things to be conſider'd in this caſe are, What this Reverence is; and how it may be beſt expreſs'd or perform'd in the Worſhip of God? Accordingly therefore in handling of theſe words, I ſhall enquire,

Firſt, Into the *Nature* of this Reverence, that is requir'd in the Service of God, and ſhew wherein it conſiſts.

Secondly, Into the *Manner*, how it may be beſt obſerv'd and ſecured in the Publick Aſſemblies. I begin with the

Firſt, which is to ſhew the *Nature* of this Reverence, and wherein it conſiſts. In order to which, I ſay in general, That Reverence is ſuch a Religious ſenſe of the Glory and Greatneſs of the Divine Majeſty, as engages us to behave our ſelves becomingly in his preſence. And this is partly *Internal*, and partly *External*.

Internal Reverence conſiſts in the aweful Apprehenſions of the *Mind*, concerning the Greatneſs of the Perſon, we addreſs to.

External Reverence conſiſts in the decent Demeanour of the *Outward Man*, by well ordering of our words and geſtures in our Applications to him. The *former* is the Reverence of the *Soul*, and the *latter* of the *Body*; *both*

which are to attend us into the Houſe of *God*, and to be carefully minded in our ſerving of him.

(1.) I ſay, There is an *Inward* Reverence of the *Soul*, that is to accompany Divine Worſhip: And this conſiſts in aweful Apprehenſions of the Mind, concerning him, we draw nigh to. This is hinted to us in the Firſt part of our Text; *God is greatly to be feared in the Aſſemblies of the Saints*; That is, our Minds are to be poſſeſſed with a profound and aweful Dread of the Divine Majeſty, in our approaches to him: which the Apoſtle ſtiles a *Godly fear*: And this ariſeth from a ſenſe of our infinite diſtance from God, and of our daily and neceſſary dependance upon him. For when we conſider, how vaſtly the great Sovereign of the World, is above ſinful Duſt and Aſhes; and are ſo affected with the Thoughts of it, as never to appear before him but with the deepeſt Humility, and lowlineſs of Mind; when we entertain ſuch mean and abject thoughts of our ſelves, and our own vileneſs, as even to bluſh, and be aſham'd to approach ſo great a Preſence; when, I ſay, we have ſuch a true ſenſe of this infinite diſtance and diſproportion between him and us, then are we ſaid, to *fear God in the Aſſemblies of the Saints*, and to have a Religious awe and dread when we draw nigh unto him.

Now to beget this holy Fear and Dread in us, we are frequently in our thoughts to deſcend to a particular Conſideration, of the infinite Attributes and Perfections of our Maker; and this will help to ſcrew up our Minds to a due pitch of Reverence and Veneration for him.

Thus if we Conſider,

1. The infinite *Power* of God, *who made the World, and all things in it*, by the Word of his Mouth; who, as he ſpake them all into Being, ſo can he ſpeak them back again into Nothing, when he pleaſes: And then think with our ſelves, that 'tis this great and glorious Being, that in our Publick Aſſemblies we are ſpeaking to, and attending upon,

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This will ſtrike our Minds with a holy Awe and Dread of him; and make us afraid to dally with ſuch an immenſe and powerful Being. Again,

2. If we Ponder upon the infinite *Knowledge* of God, *who ſearches the heart, and underſtandeth our thoughts long before hand*; that *his Eyes behold, and his Eye-lids try the Children of Men*; that *all things are open and naked before him*, and nothing can be hid from his Preſence; And then conſider, That 'tis this All-knowing and Heart-ſearching Being, that in our Publick Aſſemblies we addreſs to. This will farther imprint this Sacred Awe and Dread upon our Souls, and keep us from all Irreverence in ſo great a Preſence. Moreover,

3. If we take into our Conſideration the manifold *Mercies* and tranſcendent *Goodneſs* of God, *who giveth us life, and breath, and all things*; upon whoſe Bounty we entirely depend: If we call to Mind, that he is daily heaping his Mercies and Bleſſings upon us; that we live wholly upon him, and cannot ſubſiſt one moment without him: And then Conſider, That 'tis this gracious and bountiful Being that in our Publick Aſſemblies we are directing our Worſhip to, This will make us *fear the Lord for his goodneſs*, Hoſ. 3. 5. and ſo fix our Minds in the Love and Contemplation of him, that we ſhall be both aſhamed and afraid to offend ſo great and good a Benefactor.

Laſtly, If we Conſider how infinitely *Jealous* and tender God Almighty is of his *honour*, and that he whom we Addreſs to, will not be mock'd with Vain and Hypocritical Pretences of Serving of him: That he is to be lov'd *with all our Heart, and all our Mind, and all our Strength*; and will not be Rival'd by the World, the Fleſh, or the Devil, in the acts of Worſhip: And then call to mind, that in our Publick Aſſemblies we are Serving this *Jealous God*, who watches all the Wandrings of our Heart from him, This will make us, in the *Pſalmiſt*'s Phraſe, to *ſerve the Lord with fear*; and even to *rejoice before him with trembling*.

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In a word, if we ſeriouſly meditate on the boundleſs and adorable *Perfections* of the Divine Nature, and bethink with our ſelves *who* and *what* that God is, in whoſe Preſence we are, when we enter his Houſe, and offer up our Prayers and Praiſes to him, 'Twill make us bow our Souls before him, and create thoſe devout and awful Apprehenſions of him, in which this *Inward reverence* and *Godly fear* doth mainly conſiſt.

And this is one Reaſon, why the Publick *Liturgy* of our *Church*, was caſt into ſo many *ſhort Prayers* or *Collects*, each of which beginning with ſome *Attribute* or *Perfection* of God, proper to uſher in the Petition that follows it, is thereby fitted, both to keep up the Reverence and Attention of the Mind in asking it; and to quicken our Faith and Hopes of obtaining it.

And ſo much briefly of that *Inward* fear and reverence that is to attend all our Addreſſes to the Divine Majeſty, held forth in thoſe words, *God is greatly to be feared in the Aſſemblies of his Saints.*

Now theſe Internal awful Apprehenſions of the Mind concerning God, are to be expreſs'd,

(2.) By the *Outward* Reverence of the *Body*; which conſiſts in the well-ordering of our *words* and *geſtures* in our Applications to him. And this is held forth to us in the *laſt* words of the Text; *And to be had in Reverence of all that are round about him.*

That *Reverence* relates to the *Outward Man*, and implies becoming geſtures and behaviour of the *Body*, is evident not only from the Nature of the thing, but from the univerſal Conſent and Practice of Mankind; who have always ſhewed their Reſpect this way, to thoſe that are above them.

2 Sam. 9. 6. 1 King. 1. 31. Hest. 3. 2. *Mephiboſheth* the Son of *Jonathan* fell on his Face and did Reverence to *David*. *Bathſheba* bowed her Face to the Earth, and did Reverence to the King. All the King's Servants bowed and did Reverence to *Haman*. By which

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it appears, that humble and decent Poſtures of the Body, have been ever reckon'd to be Tokens of Reſpect and Reverence.

That this *External* Reverence is to be us'd likewiſe in the *Worſhip* of God, is evident too from many Precepts and Examples in *Holy Scripture*. St. *Paul* beſeeches the *Romans*, to *preſent their bodies, as a living, holy and acceptable Sacrifice unto God; which is our reaſonable Service.* Where the Apoſtle calls the preſenting our *bodies* a *living Sacrifice*, in Oppoſition to the *dead bodies* that were *offer'd* to him under the *law*: And becauſe *brute beaſts* and *irrational* Creatures were then offer'd up. He ſtiles the preſenting *our bodies* a *reaſonable* Service; which as it is more holy, ſo it is a more fitting and acceptable Preſent to our Maker. The ſame Apoſtle exhorts the *Corinthians*, to *glorifie God with their bodies*, as well as Souls; which is to be done by reverent and becoming Geſtures in his Service. And to engage them thereunto, tells them, that they are *both* his, and muſt be *both* dedicated to him. He that breath'd into us a Living and immortal *Soul*, did likewiſe frame the *Body* to be a fit Manſion and Companion for it; and united them together for his Service: And therefore juſtly expects the Homage and Service of *both*. Yea he further adds, that Chriſt redeemed the Body as well as the Soul from *the bondage of Corruption*: And God hath promiſed to glorifie *both hereafter*: And therefore *both* are requir'd to glorifie him *here*.

Rom. 12. 1.

1 Cor. 6. 19, 20.

The Truth is, an inward Reverence for God will always draw after it the Reverence of the outward Man; And where the Mind is poſſeſs'd with awful Apprehenſions of the divine Majeſty, it will diſcover it ſelf in the External Decency both of Words and Actions. And accordingly we find, that good Men, in all Ages, have taken Care, not only to keep up a Religious Awe and Dread of God in their *Souls*, but have been as careful, likewiſe, to expreſs it by the External Acts and Poſtures of the *Body*.

Now

Now what outward Geſtures are moſt expreſſive of Honour and Reverence, the Practice of the *Church*, and the Cuſtom of the *Country* where we live, will be the beſt Guides to direct us. *Uncovering* of the *Head*, *Bowing* the *Body*, *putting off* the *Shooes*, *Kneeling*, *Proſtration*, *lifting up* the *Eyes* and *Hands unto Heaven*, have been *Ancient* Signs and Tokens of *Honour*. The Lord commanded *Moſes* to *put off his Shooes*, becauſe the place whereon he ſtood was *Holy Ground*: And to this *Solomon* alludes, when he directs Men to look to their *Feet*, when they *enter* into the *Houſe of God*. *Joſhua fell on his Face to the Earth, and worſhipped God*. And *David* calls upon Men to *worſhip, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker*: By which we may obſerve, That *Diſcalceation*, *Kneeling*, and *Proſtrating*, were the uſual Expreſſions of outward Reverence under the *Old Teſtament*. In the *New*, we find *uncovering* the *Head* to be made a part of that *bodily* Reverence that is to be uſed in Religious Aſſemblies. And our Bleſſed *Saviour*'s Example hath made *kneeling* the proper Poſture of Devotion: For in all his *Prayers to his Father*, we find him upon his *Knees*, the *Evangeliſts* frequently relating, That he *kneeled down and prayed*.

Lament. 3. 41. Exod. 3. 5. Eccl. 5. 1. Joſh. 5. 14. Pſal. 95. 6, 7. 1 Cor. 11. 7. Luke 24. 41.

In *our* Days, *Uncovering* the *Head*, *Standing*, and *Kneeling*, are the proper Poſtures and Expreſſions of Reverence. Hence we are wont to riſe up to our Superiours, and to be uncovered in their Preſence, as a Token of Reſpect to them. When we offer a Petition to a Prince, we do it upon our Knees. To ſit in the Preſence of a great Man, is reckon'd a great Rudeneſs; and he that preſents a Petition to a King in that Poſture, inſtead of an Anſwer, will meet with nothing but Frowns and a Rebuke.

Now that which is irreverent and unmannerly, when done to Men, can never be any part of Reverence towards God: For God, as he juſtly may, expects the beſt things, that we have; and will be ſerv'd in the humbleſt manner, that we can: Otherwiſe, we incurr that heavy Curſe,

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denounced by the Prophet *Malachi*, againſt ſuch as having in their Flock a *Male*, will yet vow and ſacrifice unto God a *corrupt thing*. Mal. 1. 14. And therefore to ſit at our Prayers, as the manner of ſome is, and to offer up our Petitions to God in a careleſs, loiling, and ſlovenly Poſture, as too many do, is the rudeſt Affront that can be offer'd to the Majeſty of Heaven; and we may well think, that ſuch an Indignity will be one Day anſwered with the greateſt Indignation. God Almighty hath declar'd, That he will not accept the *blind*, or the *lame*, for *Sacrifice*; nor be put off with ſuch rude and unworthy Services, as would be reckon'd an abuſe to an earthly Prince. And therefore we find him thus upbraiding thoſe that preſent him with ſuch Offerings, *Go and offer it*, ſaith he, *to thy Governour, and* Mal. 1. 8. *ſee whether he will be pleaſed with thee, or accept thy Perſon:* And ſure they muſt have very low and mean Thoughts of *God*, who think *that* Service good enough for *him*, which would be thought *ſawcy* and *unmannerly* when done to his *Creatures*.

But our *Text*, if well attended to, would teach theſe Men *better manners* in all their approaches to their Maker. For that tells them, That *God is greatly to be feared*, by the inward Dread and Awfulneſs of the *Mind*; and *to be had in Reverence*, by the outward Decency and Humility of the *Body*: And *both* theſe are to accompany them to the publick Aſſemblies, and to be carefully minded, by all that draw nigh unto him.

And thus having deſcrib'd the Reverence that is to be obſerved in the Worſhip of God, I ſhall add no more under this Head; but to admoniſh you to be mindfull of *both* parts of it, in all your ſolemn Addreſſes to him; that is, to poſſeſs your *hearts* with awful Apprehenſions of him; and to compoſe your *bodies* into all the decent Poſtures of Humility and Adoration. So ſhall you *ſerve God acceptably, with Reverence and godly Fear*, and thereby *find Grace to help in time of need*.

From whence I proceed;

Secondly, To consider the *Way* and *Manner* how this Reverence may be best expres'd and secured in the *Publick Assemblies*.

To this end we must note, That there are but two ways of celebrating the *Publick Worship* and *Service* of *God*; and they are either

First, By a *Publick Liturgy*, or well-compos'd *Forms* of Prayer, wherein both the *Matter* and *Words* are digested and prepared to our Hands; or,

Secondly, By *Extemporary Effusions*, where *both* these are left to the suddain Conceptions of him that prayeth.

The *former* is the Establish'd way of the *Church of England*, wherein she treads in the Steps of all *Antiquity*; there being no *Christian Church* from the *days* of the *Apostles*, to the *present Age*, but what hath perform'd their publick Worship by a *Liturgy* or *set Forms* of Prayer.

The *latter* is the way of *Dissenters*; who have herein broke off from the Ancient Practice of all *Christian* Churches; and have been unhappily misled into it *by the cunning Craftiness of some, who lay in wait to deceive*.

My Business then at present will be, to examine which of these two Ways best tends to promote and preserve that holy Reverence of Body and Mind before describ'd; that is, whether by *set Forms*, or *sudden Effusions*, God is most *feared in the Assemblies of the Saints, and had in Reverence of those that draw near to him?*

But before I enter upon the Discussion of this Point, I shall *prepare* my way to it, by *premising* these four or five things. And the

1*st*. is, To assure you that I have no Design of offending or provoking any Person; well knowing that *the wrath of Man worketh not the righteousness of God*. I call God to witness, That my only aim is to inform and settle your Judgment aright, in a Matter wherein your own Welfare, as well as the Peace, Unity, and Edification of the Church

Jam. 1. 20.

Church are so deeply concerned. St. *Paul* bare Record concerning the *Israelites*, that they had a *Zeal*, which yet in some things, was *not according to knowledge*; meaning, That they had some *mistaken* Notions concerning the Law, and the Righteousness of it, wherein they needed better Information. And therefore he not only *prayed that Israel might be saved, but instructed* them too in the right *way* and *method of Salvation*. And there are some likewise in *our* Days, who may have a *good Meaning* towards *God*, and yet may *mistake* their *way*, and stand in need of a *guide* to direct their *good Intentions*. And if, by the Example of this great Apostle, I shall endeavour to rectifie the misguided Zeal of such Persons, and to help forward their growth in Grace and Knowledge, I cannot doubt their kind Acceptance of my good Will; and that they will candidly hear and receive, what is so honestly meant and tender'd to them. Let me therefore bespeak you in the Words of St. *Peter*, to *lay aside all guile, and all malice, and hypocrisie, and envying, and evil speaking: And as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby*. Rom. 10. 1, 2. 1 Pet. 2. 1, 2.

2. The *next* thing to be *premis'd* is, That the Question at present, is *not* about the *Lawfulness* of *Forms* of Prayer; for this is now generally *granted* by all *sober Dissenters*; and indeed 'twere strange if it should not, when our Blessed *Saviour* himself prescrib'd a *Form*, and commanded his Disciples and Followers to use it; yea, when all the Prayers we find offered up by our Saviour, consisted of *Forms*: For the Evangelists tell us, That *he prayed three times, saying the same Words*. Luke 11. 1.

And as Forms of Prayer in *general*, so *ours* in particular are by the far greatest part of *Dissenters* adjudged to be lawful; for they can, and do frequently join with us in the use of them, and maintain occasional Communion with us in them; which they would not do, if they thought them unlawful.

So that they are not now frighted from our Service, by the hard Names of *Baal*, and *Dagon*, and *Babylon*, and *Mass-Service*, and the like; which some designing Men, to create Schisms and Divisions among us, formerly put upon it: But ever since they have been perswaded to come near it, and to be better acquainted with it, all these Bugbears vanish; and it appears to be not only a tolerable, but a pious and wholesome Model of Devotion.

3. As we are Agreed about the *Lawfulness* of *Forms*, so neither doth *our Church* condemn all use of more *free* and *conceiv'd* Prayers in their *due* time and place. For in our *private* and *secret* Prayers, wherein we are to confess our own particular Sins, and to lay before God our own particular Wants and Necessities, we are allow'd to enlarge our selves, as we shall think meet.

But because the *publick* Worship ought to be so fram'd and worded, that all may know *what* they are to *join in* and *say Amen to*, therefore all *Christian Churches* have thought a standing *Liturgy* most expedient to preserve the Unity and Harmony of divine Worship; that *Christians* may *with one heart and one mouth glorifie* their great Creator.

But in *private* they are left at Liberty to their own conceiv'd Devotions; and may use their own or others Expressions, as they find them best suit with their Necessities and Occasions: Yea, even in *publick* too, in some extraordinary Cases, wherein the Church hath made no Provision, Ministers are not restrain'd from a sober and decent Exercise of their own Abilities; provided it be done with Prudence and a due Submission to Authority. In short, then, the Question in Debate is,

Whether the Reverence and Solemnity of *Publick Worship* be not better provided for and secured by *well-composed Forms*, than by leaving Men to their own free and *Extemporary Effusions*.

And that we may advance by degrees, to the better clearing of this Point, I shall *premise*,

4. That

4. That a *compos'd* Addreſs is always eſteemed a Token of greater Reverence and Reſpect, than *ſudden* and *unpremeditated* Speech: For the *one* betokens a due Sence of the Greatneſs of the Perſon we addreſs to, before whom we dare not venture to utter any thing raſhly or haſtily; the *other* betrays mean Thoughts of the Perſon with whom we think fit to make ſo bold. And therefore we never addreſs to Princes, but in a compoſed form of words; to ſhew the awe and ſenſe we have of their greatneſs: we bind up our Tongues to a form of Speech, leſt by letting them looſe, we ſhould unawares fall into thoſe Indecencies, that might rather Affront than Honour the Majeſty we addreſs to. And if this be a piece of Reſpect to be ſhewed to *Men* like our ſelves, to take a due care of our Words and Behaviour in ſpeaking to them, can any think fit to make ſo bold with their *Maker*, as to vent any thing of a ſudden before him? Certainly, the Reverence we owe to the *Supream* Being, ought not to be leſs than that we are wont to pay to *Inferiour Creatures*: And therefore what is irreverent when done to *them*, muſt be much more ſo when done to *him*; for 'tis not to be imagin'd, that the *King of Kings* ſhould have a leſs regard to his Honour, than *Earthly Princes*: and conſequently, it muſt be abſurd and irrational to treat the Majeſty of Heaven, who is infinitely above the Kings and Potentates of the Earth, more rudely than we are wont to do the Works of his own Hands.

But to advance farther in this Point, I ſhall *premiſe*,

5. That God Almighty is not to be wrought upon, either by the multitude or variety of Words: and therefore neither of theſe can be any token of Reverence and Reſpect to him. And becauſe *here* lies the *main* Errour and Miſtake in this Matter, I ſhall *enlarge* here a little the more, that we may the better diſcover and remove it.

I ſay then, That the novelty and variety of *Expreſſions* in Prayer, hath *no* manner of Efficacy or Acceptance at all with *God*. For we find him often condemning, but never com-

commending the uſe of them: Theſe things may indeed do much with *Men*, who muſt be inform'd of our Wants, before they can relieve them; and being led moſtly by their Paſſions, are often moved by the Arts and Importunity of Speech; but *God* Almighty, who knows our Neceſſities before we ask, and is above and without all manner of Paſſions, is not to be moved or prevail'd upon by theſe Arts. So that to think that God is taken with many and new Words, is to think him ſuch a one as our ſelves; yea, 'tis to rank him among the worſt and meaneſt ſort: for Wiſe Men eaſily ſee through theſe Arts; and 'tis only the blind and weaker part of Mankind, that are led or influenc'd by them. And therefore *Solomon* wills us to expreſs the ſenſe of our great diſtance from him, by the Eccl. 5. 2. Paucity and Diſcretion of our words; *for God is in Heaven, ſaith he, and we are upon Earth; therefore our words unto him ſhould be few.*

Indeed, to ſpeak properly, Prayer is not the Work of the *Tongue*, or a Matter of *Words*, but the Work and Buſineſs of the *Soul*: and conſiſts not ſo much in lifting up the Exod. 14. 15. *Voice*, as in the Elevation of the *Heart* unto God. *Moſes* is ſaid to *cry unto the Lord*, when he *utter'd not a word*: 1 Sam. 1. 13. and *Hannah ſpake in her heart, and prayed*, when her *voice* was *not heard*. And we find St. *James* aſcribing the *Efficacy* and *Succeſs* of our Prayers, not to the nimbleneſs and Jam. 5. 16. Δέησις ἐνεργουμένη. volubility of the *Tongue*, but to the inward workings and warmth of the *Heart*; telling us that the *inwrought fervent Prayer of the Righteous*, (for ſo the word imports) *availeth much.*

The truth is, Oſtentation and Vanity is commonly ſeen in many words; and Pride lurketh under a Profuſeneſs of Speech: Whereas Modeſty and Reverence, the much better qualifications of a Petitioner, are beſt ſeen in few and well-weigh'd Expreſſions; and theſe evermore find the beſt 1 Pet. 5. 5. acceptance: for *God* and *Man* too *reſiſt the proud*; and *both* conſpire to *ſhew grace* and *favour to the humble*. A bold arrogant

arrogant Petitioner, that comes rather to ſhew his Parts, than his Wants, and runs out his Petition into length and multiplicity of words, is commonly diſmiſs'd with frowns and a repulſe; and they that are thus *full of themſelves*, are *ſent empty away*: whereas an humble Petitioner, that comes with a deep ſenſe of his own defects, and the greater excellencies of him he applies to, and manifeſts both theſe by the humility of his Words and Geſtures, generally finds an eaſie acceſs, and a kind acceptance.

A plain inſtance hereof we have in the *Phariſee* and the *Publican*. The poor *Publican*, out of a deep ſenſe of his own unworthineſs, had ſcarce confidence enough to *lift up his eyes unto Heaven*; *but ſmote upon his breaſt*; and with a profound humility of Soul and Body utter'd only this *ſhort form* of Prayer, *God be merciful to me a ſinner*. Well, and what was the effect of theſe few and hearty words? why God Almighty was well pleas'd with the humble Sincerity of his Addreſs, and ſent him home juſtified to his own Houſe. The proud *Phariſee*, on the other hand, comes with his long Prayers, and ſpins out his Petition into a multitude and variety of Expreſſions, beſtowing many *good words* upon *himſelf*, as a Saint of the higheſt form; *God, I thank thee, I am not as other men*, &c. and many *bad words* on *others*, and eſpecially on the poor *Publican*: But what was the iſſue of this bold and vaunting Harangue? why, our *Saviour* condemn'd him for an arrant *Hypocrite*, and ſharply rebuk'd his vain babling. The *one* by being low in his *own* eyes, roſe the higher in *God's*: the *other* by exalting himſelf, fell into the greater Scorn and Contempt. By which it evidently appears, that 'tis not the multitude or variety of words, that is pleaſing unto God: for though much ſpeaking may (as one hath obſerv'd) ſtorm the *Ear*, yet 'tis Modeſty and Humility that takes the *Heart*.

Laſtly, There is one thing more to be *premiſ'd*, and that is, that ſuddain and unpremeditated Speech is liable to many

many *Indecencies* and *Imperfections*; yea, ſuch as oftener ſtand in need of a *Pardon*, than procure *Acceptance*. *Solomon* hath told us, That *in the multitude of words there wanteth not ſin; and he that is haſty of ſpeech uttereth folly.* 'Tis hard, when the Tongue hath too great a liberty, to prevent its Extravagance: and this *unruly Member* is not eaſily confin'd within the rules of Decency.

Prov. 10. 19.

Experience ſhews, that in long and ſudden Speeches, many things are ſaid, that had been better not to have been ſpoke. And he that conſiders what raw, indigeſted Speeches have proceeded out of the Mouths of ſuch as have taken this liberty in their Prayers to God, will ſee great reaſon to tye up the Tongue to the good Behaviour, and to beg Pardon for the Irreverence of ſuch Addreſſes. *David* reſolv'd to *keep his mouth as it were with a bridle*, to curb and reſtrain its Extravagance; and upon great deliberation, ſaid, *I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not in my tongue.* And this we ſhould all do, not only in our Converſation with *Men*, where raſh and unadviſed words frequently occaſion much Evil; but chiefly in our Addreſſes to *God*, where, as the Danger is greater, ſo ſhould our care and circumſpection be ſo too. To which end we ſhould all pray with the *Pſalmiſt*, *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth*, that nothing may paſs through it without due Examination; *and keep the door of my lips*, that no Evil may enter in, or come out of it: And ſuch *a Door-keeper* ought every one to be *in the houſe of God.*

Pſal. 3. 1.

Pſal. 141. 3.

And thus having a little *prepar'd* the Way, by *premiſing* theſe few things, I ſhall now come cloſer to the Matter in *Queſtion*, and enquire whether a well-compoſed *Liturgy* or *Forms* of Prayer be not better to preſerve and ſecure that Reverence and Solemnity of Publick Worſhip before deſcrib'd, than *ſudden* and *conceived* Prayers? To which I anſwer, Yes; and ſhall endeavour to demonſtrate it by theſe following Arguments.

Firſt,

First, That which beſt helps us to come *prepared* to the publick Worſhip of God, does moſt conduce to preſerve the Reverence that is to be us'd in it: But publick Forms of Prayer do beſt aſſiſt us in making ſuch a Preparation; and therefore muſt conduce moſt to ſecure the Reverence that is to be ſhew'd in it.

That *Preparation* is neceſſary before we approach the Divine Majeſty, I ſuppoſe will be eaſily granted by all that have any ſenſe of his infinite Power and Greatneſs: for without this we ruſh into the Preſence of God, *as the Horſe ruſheth into the Battel*; not conſidering whither we are a going: and therefore we are commanded to *prepare our hearts to ſeek the Lord.* Jer. 8. 6.

Now this Preparation is much better helped by a Publick *Liturgy*, than it can be by *Extemporary* Effuſions. For where the Matter of Publick Prayer is digeſted into fit words, there we may peruſe and meditate upon it before hand; and thereby be aſſiſted to come prepar'd, with Affections ſuitable to it. When we know what we are about to *confeſs*, we may be able to excite that *Sorrow*, that *Shame* and *Indignation* with our ſelves, that is fit to accompany ſuch a *Confeſſion*. When we know what we are about to *ask*, we may come prepared with a due Senſe of our *want* of it, and with ardent *deſires* of having it ſupply'd. When we know for what *mercies* and *bleſſings* we are about to give *thanks*, we may ſtir up in our hearts that *joy* and inward *ſenſe* of the divine *goodneſs*, that is proper for ſuch *Thankſgivings*.

In a word, when we can conſider before-hand for *whom*, and for *what* we are going to addreſs to our Maker, weighing each Petition, and meditating upon the ſundry Attributes and Properties of God Almighty, with which they are uſher'd in, we may ſuit our *affections* to the *matter* and *words* of ſuch an Addreſs, and come ready to *go along* with *all* the Parts of ſuch a Service.

Now this is impoſſible to be done in *ſudden* and *conceiv'd* Prayers; becauſe we cannot know before-hand what will be utter'd: And how can we prepare our ſelves for ſuch an Exerciſe, which we are wholly unacquainted with, and know not either the Matter, or Words, or Order in which it will be delivered? Neither is this poſſible to be known, when the Miniſter himſelf is uncertain before-hand what he ſhall ſay. Such a one may confeſs ſome Sins in publick, which many in the Congregation cannot charge themſelves withal: And ſo may falſly accuſe them before God. He may put up Petitions for things, which may be inexpedient for ſome of them to *ask*, and for God to *grant*.

And how is it poſſible to prepare or bring devout Affe-
1 Cor. 14. 8. ctions to ſuch a Service? *If the trumpet give an uncertain ſound, who can prepare himſelf to the battel?* If he that officiates be uncertain before-hand, what he ſhall *ſay*, and the People uncertain what they ſhall *hear*, as both muſt be when their Prayers are left to *ſudden* Effuſions; there can be *no Preparation* for ſuch a Worſhip; and conſequently *no* due *Reverence* in attending upon it: Which is the *firſt* Argument.

Secondly, That which beſt helps us to *pray with the Underſtanding*, muſt beſt promote the Reverence and Solemnity of publick Worſhip: But a well compoſed Liturgy beſt helps to *pray with the Underſtanding*, and therefore beſt promotes the Reverence of divine Worſhip.

That Reverence is mightily promoted by the *Underſtanding* of our *Prayers*, I think is too evident to need any Proof.

For ſince it conſiſts (as we before obſerv'd) in awful Apprehenſions concerning God, it ſuppoſes a due Underſtanding before *whom* we are, and *what* we ſay, in addreſſing to
Eccl. 5. 4. him: Without which we only *offer* him *the Sacrifice of Fools*; which *Solomon* tells us he takes no Pleaſure in. For 'tis the *Underſtanding*, that makes our Prayers both a *reaſonable* and *acceptable Service*.

And

And therefore the *Apoſtle* directs Men to *pray with the Underſtanding*, and to uſe ſuch eaſie Terms and Language in the publick Devotion, that the People may be edified; blaming all praying and prophecying in an unknown Tongue, or which is all one, in dark, difficult, and myſtical Phraſes; whereby the *mind* is *not edified*, and the *Underſtanding* is *unfruitful*. 1 Cor. 14.

Now herein, likewiſe, a *well-compoſed Form* is of far greater Uſe, than ſudden and conceived Prayer. For in a publick *Liturgy*, all the Expreſſions are well weighed and conſider'd; great Care is taken that the Words ſuit the matter; and that *both* may be made eaſy and intelligible to the People: All the parts of it are deliberately ſcann'd and review'd; that they may be fitted to the *neceſſities*, and likewiſe to the *capacities*, of the whole Congregation: So that the meaneſt Perſon may underſtand it, as well as the greateſt; and *he that occupieth the room of the learned*, may apprehend and go along with the whole Service.

This is more than any can be ſecur'd of in *ſudden* and *extempore* Prayers. For *there* the Miniſter being unprovided, before-hand of Words, *may* and often *does*, ſpeak very improperly and incoherently; and being forced to utter what firſt comes to head, may let fall ſuch Expreſſions, as neither ſuit the Majeſty of God, nor the Underſtanding of the People. He may be either *confuſed* in his Method, or *obſcure* in his Expreſſions; *darkening ſpeech without knowledge*, and falling upon ſuch *words* and *phraſes*, as a great part of the Congregation may not underſtand: Which yet muſt paſs as they come; there being no way of reviewing or amending ſuch Effuſions.

Theſe and ſuch like Inconveniences, which 'tis well known attend ſuch Prayers, are great Hindrances to true Devotion, and marr the Reverence of publick Worſhip.

In a word, 'tis moſt certain that both Miniſter and People may better *pray with the Underſtanding* in a known *Form*,

where the Matter and Words are well digeſted, than they can poſſibly do, where both are left at great Uncertainties. *Second thoughts*, we ſay, in Matters of Moment, are always the *beſt*: And when theſe are cloathed in plain, familiar, and intelligible Terms, they are far to be preferr'd before ſudden and haſty Conceptions: And as two Eyes ſee more than one, ſo 'tis reaſonable to conceive that a *Synod* or *Convocation* of many able, pious, and learned Divines ſhould better contrive the Matter and Method of publick Worſhip, upon mature Deliberation, than any *ſingle* Perſon can do by his own ſudden and indeliberate Effuſions. This is ſo plain, that one would wonder how 'tis poſſible for Men to be ſeduced into any Thought or Belief of the contrary.

Thirdly, That way of Prayer wherein we may join with greater *Faith* and *Aſſurance*, is the moſt ſolemn, and fitteſt to be us'd in publick Worſhip: But this we may better do in a Form than without it; and therefore *that* is the beſt way to ſecure the Reverence and Solemnity of publick Worſhip. That *Faith* and a good *Aſſurance* of *being heard* are neceſſary Ingredients of an *effectual Prayer*, St. *James* hath plainly told us; for he wills all that would obtain any thing at the Hands of God, to *ask in Faith, nothing wavering*; *for he that wavers is like a wave of the ſea, driven with the wind, and toſſed: Let not that man think that he ſhall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unſtable in all his ways.* And our Bleſſed *Saviour* hath told us, That we muſt agree, and join together in what we ask, before it will be given us. So that a joynt *Conſent* and *Agreement* in our Prayers, offer'd up in *Faith, without wrath and doubting*, is the beſt means of procuring to us the Succeſs of them.

Jam. 1. 6, 7, 8.

Matth. 18. 19.

Now this may be far better done by a *publick Form*, than it can be by our own *private Conceptions*. For by a ſtanding *Liturgy*, People may be well acquainted with their Prayers, and know before hand, what they offer unto God; they may be ſatisfied, that the Matter and Words of their Prayers

Prayers are ſo fram'd, as that they will be *both* accepted by him; and ſo they may the more readily join in them, and ſay with the *Pſalmiſt*, *Let the words of our mouth as well as the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in thy ſight*; for being well aſſur'd, that what they ask is ſound, and the manner of asking it well-pleaſing unto God, they may pray with *full aſſurance of Faith*, and heartily join in a regular and well compoſed Devotion, ſaying *Amen*, to every part of it.

This is more than we can do in conceiv'd or *extempore* Prayers; for not knowing what the Miniſter will utter, we cannot tell whether we may ſafely join with him or no, unleſs we take him to be divinely inſpir'd, and ſo extraordinarily aſſiſted from above, that his Tongue cannot falter, nor his Heart vent any thing amiſs. But alas! conſidering the many Paſſions and Infirmities, that all Men are ſubject to, this muſt be a very unſafe thing to depend upon. For *ſome* may be unſound in their Principles, and ſo may vent their Errors in their Prayers: Others may miſtake their Choler for Zeal, and ſo mix their Humours and Paſſions with their Devotion; by which means, the Publick offices of Religion, muſt receive a tincture from Mens corrupt Inclinations, and partake of the Infirmities of thoſe that perform them.

Yea *ſome* have arriv'd to that degree of Folly, as to tell God Almighty *News* in their Prayers, and to acquaint him with the Affairs and Paſſages of the Town or Place where they live. If any have diſguſted them, *they* ſhall hear of it, in their Publick Aſſemblies; where they ſeek to draw in God Almighty of their ſide, and to make him a Party in their Quarrels.

Sometimes you ſhall hear Men praying one *againſt* another; as in *divided* Places and Congregations it often happens: where you may perceive their different *Opinions* by their *Prayers*; and find their little Pets and Grudges mingled and interwoven with their Petitions.

And

And are not *theſe* great Indecencies in the Worſhip of God? Can any wiſe or good Man joyn or ſay *Amen* to ſuch Prayers? Will you call this an acceptable Sacrifice unto God? May he not juſtly ſay to *ſuch*, as he did of
Iſai. 1. old to the *Jews*, *bring no more ſuch vain Oblations, they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them?* Is not this to *offer ſtrange fire unto the Lord*; and ſuch as may juſtly *kindle* his Wrath againſt us? And how is it poſſible to *remedy* theſe Evils, whilſt Men are left to vent what they pleaſe, and are only fond of their own Inventions?

Fourthly, That which helps us to perform the Duty of Prayer with the *greateſt fervency* and the *leaſt diſtraction*, muſt beſt preſerve the Reverence of Publick Worſhip: but this is beſt done by a publick *Liturgy*; and therefore that muſt be the moſt ſerious and ſolemn way of Worſhiping God. For the better underſtanding of this Argument, we muſt call to Mind, what I before *premiſ'd*, that the Duty of Prayer conſiſts not in *Words*, and much leſs in the *Novelty* and *Variety* of them: for God Almighty is not to be charm'd by the Arts of Speech, or wrought upon by the importunity of words. No, he underſtands the moſt ſilent breathings of the Soul after him; and hears the Language of thoſe Sighs and Groans that cannot be utter'd; and theſe things are of greater force and efficacy with him, than the moſt pompous Rhetorick or flouriſh of Words. All the uſe of *words*, in the Service of God, is with reſpect to *our ſelves*; that we may join and agree together in our Petitions, and with *one mouth* offer up the *ſame* Prayers and Praiſes to God; which renders them the more pleaſing and the more prevalent with him.

But whether this be beſt done by the well-adviſed words of a *form*, or the ſudden Effuſions of *conceiv'd* Prayer, is the thing in Queſtion: For the clearing whereof, we muſt note farther,

That the *inventing of Words* in Prayer, which is the *work* of the *Head*, is *one* thing; and the *exciting Affections* ſuitable

suitable to them, which is the *work* of the *Heart*, is *another*; Now, because the Soul of Man is of so limited a Nature in all its Operations, that it cannot attend to two or more things at once, at least so closely and intensely as it can to one, therefore the *inventing* of *words* in Prayer, which is the exercise of the *Brain*, must needs be a *hindrance* to the Soul in *exciting* the *Affections*, which is the great business of the *Heart*.

Now herein plainly appears the Usefulness and Conveniency of Publick *forms*, in which the *words* being *prepared* to our hands, the Mind hath nothing to do but to *excite* and *employ Affections* suited to them; as namely, to stir up *Sorrow* in *Confessing*, *Desire* in *Petitioning*, *Joy* in *Thanksgiving*, and the like; which cannot be so well done, when when other things are to be minded at the same time. And therefore a *form* of Prayer, which gives the Soul full scope and leisure to attend to these things, without calling it off to the study of words, must best promote the inward *fervency* and *devotion* of the *Mind*, in which the life of Prayer doth mainly consist.

And this is true with relation both to the *Minister*, and *People*.

The Minister, in a *conceiv'd* Prayer, is wholly employ'd in finding out *Matter*, and putting it into *Words*; which is work enough to take up his Thoughts: and his *Head* being thus *busied* about these things, it must necessarily hinder the *greater* work and business of the *Heart*: since the Soul cannot so closely attend to *both*, at the same time.

And as for the *People*, they not knowing what the Minister will utter, must attend likewise, as the words come, to the sence of them; and bethink with themselves whether they may safely join in them: And so the People too are put upon *Studying*, instead of *Praying*; and many times, before they can do this, the Minister goes too fast for them; and whilst they are considering *one* thing, he is gone to

another:

another: by which means they muſt be often at a loſs, and their Devotion miſerably diſtracted and confounded.

Whereas in a well-compoſed *form*, all this trouble is ſaved; for the *Matter* and *Words* being well known and conſider'd before, there will be no need of employing the Mind, either in *inventing*, or in *judging* of the ſence or ſoundneſs of our Prayers; but being well ſatisfied of this before-hand, the Soul hath nothing to do, but to apply it ſelf to the Duty *without diſtraction:* by which means, the *Affections* may keep pace with the *Words*; and the *Heart* go all along with the *Prayers*.

Fifthly, That Way of Worſhip, in which the whole *Matter* of Prayer may be beſt compriz'd in full and comprehenſive *ſence*, and likewiſe beſt digeſted into due *Order* and *Method*, is certainly the moſt reverent and ſolemn Way of Publick Worſhip: But *both* theſe may be far better done in a Publick *Liturgy*, than by *ſudden* Effuſions; and therefore that muſt be the moſt ſolemn and reverent Way of Publick Worſhip.

That the *whole matter* of Prayer is to be compriz'd and taken care of in Publick Worſhip, is evident, becauſe if it be *defective* in any part, the People may *go without* ſome Bleſſings for want of asking: If it be *redundant*, they may *ask and not receive, becauſe they ask amiſs:* So that nothing *neceſſary* ought to be *omitted*, and nothing *needleſs* and *ſuperfluous* ought to be *asked* in our Publick Worſhip.

Now, that theſe things may be better taken care of in a ſtanding *Liturgy*, than by ſuddenly *conceiv'd* and *extempore* Prayers, is no leſs evident; becauſe in the *one*, *all* that we are allow'd or requir'd to pray for, that is, all things that are agreeable to the Will of God, and neceſſary for the Wants of the People, may be duely conſidered and digeſted into proper and particular forms, as they are in our excellent Liturgy: where the *daily matter* of our Prayers being ſtill the *ſame*, is ſumm'd up in *general Confeſſions, Petitions*, and *Thanksgivings*; in which, as all People are concern'd,

ſo

ſo they all may and ought heartily to join; and as for other *occaſional* Wants, *they* are provided for in particular *Forms* and *Collects*, as the Exigence of *Times* and *Neceſſities* require.

Whereas in *extempore* Prayer theſe things cannot be ſo wiſely taken care of: for in *that*, *ſome* things through haſt and incogitancy may be *omitted*, that ought to be pray'd for; *other* things, through weakneſs and inadvertence may be *added*, which are not fit to be asked: by which the Sacrifice becomes either lame and imperfect, or elſe monſtrous and impertinent; *both* which muſt render it unfit to be offered to our Maker.

Then as for *Order* and *Method*, *that* too is to be taken care of in the Publick Devotions. For God Almighty, who hath ſtil'd himſelf a *God of Order*, hath required that all things in his Service be done decently and in order. 1 Cor. 14. Now this, in pious and well-conſider'd *forms*, may be in ſome competent meaſure provided for: as may be ſeen likewiſe in our Excellent *Liturgy*; where all the parts and offices of Religion are diſpos'd in a comely and orderly Method; as by two Eminent and Learned *Divines* of our Church hath been made fully to appear. Dr. *Comber* & Dr. *Beveridge.*

Whereas in *extempore*, *conceiv'd* Prayers, Confuſion and Diſorder cannot well be avoided; there not being ſufficient time to weigh the *Connexion* and *Dependance* of one thing upon another; and ſo they muſt be dealt out to the People, not as they are in order to each other, but as they come firſt to hand.

In a word, it muſt be utterly impoſſible that the *Matter* and *Method* of publick Prayers ſhould be ſo well digeſted by *ſudden* and *unpremeditated* ſpeech, as they may be upon ſerious and mature *deliberation*.

Sixthly, That Way of Worſhip which preſcribes the Uſe of the moſt decent *geſtures* and *behaviour* of the *Body* in the Service of God, does beſt preſerve the Reverence and Solemnity of publick Worſhip: But this is beſt done by an eſtabliſh'd *Liturgy*; and therefore *that* muſt beſt preſerve the Reverence of publick Worſhip.

That God Almighty expects the Service of the *Body*, as well as that of the *Soul*, and that the *inward* reverence of the *Mind*, muſt be accompanied with the humble and decent

demeanour of the *outward Man*, hath been obſerved and proved *already*.

Now that herein likewiſe a publick *Liturgy* hath vaſtly the Advantage of *conceiv'd* and *extempore* Effuſions, will be obvious to any conſidering perſon: For the *one directs to* and *preſcribes* all the decent Poſtures of Devotion; The *other* leaves men *looſe*, to all manner of rudeneſs and irreverence in Religious Exerciſes.

Indeed, Publick Worſhip being that open and ſolemn *Acknowledgment* we jointly make to our great Creator, ought in reaſon to be perform'd with all *outward* as well as *inward* ſigns and tokens of Honour. For *what* Humility of Body, what Decency of Words and Behaviour, can be *great enough* to be ſhew'd to the *Majeſty* of *Heaven?* Eſpecially when we come to make our ſolemn appearance together before him?

For this reaſon we find in our excellent *Liturgy*, ſuch pious Rules and Orders of external decency, that in the uſe of them we may be enabled to *ſerve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear*. For in our *Confeſſion* of *Sin*, we are directed to be upon our *Knees*, in token of the low *abaſement* of our ſelves in the ſence of them: in our *Confeſſion* of *Faith*, we *ſtand*; in token of our owning and ſteady adhering to it. At the *Name* of *Jeſus*, which is *above every Name*, and at which *all things in Heaven and Earth* are commanded to *bow*, we reverently *bow* our *Bodies*; in the *Hymns* and *Praiſing* of God, we *lift up* our Selves and our Hearts unto God; which is the proper poſture of Joy. In our *Prayers* we caſt our ſelves *down*, again, on our *Knees*; which is the humble poſture of *Supplicants*, calling for *Mercy*, and begging *Grace to help in time of need:* And thus in *all* the parts and offices of Religion we are directed to thoſe *becoming geſtures*, which are moſt *Conſonant* to *Antiquity*, and moſt *expreſſive* of the *Reverence* that is to be ſhew'd in *Divine Worſhip*.

Whereas in thoſe Aſſemblies, where *extempore* Prayers guide the Devotion of the People, little or no regard is had to *bodily* Reverence: for *Sitting* at *Prayers*, when *they* are Speaking *to God*, *Covering* their *head* at *Sermons*, when *God* is Speaking *to them*; with other ſuch *Indecencies*, which would not be allowed in Addreſſes to our Superiours, are commonly ſeen among them;

Ever

Ever ſince the *Cry* againſt innocent *Ceremonies* was begun and carried on by *cunning* and *deſigning* Men, they have loſt all the *Reverence* and *Decency* of Divine Worſhip, and have brought in great *Diſorder*, and *Confuſion* in the room of it.

But if theſe Men would more ſeriouſly conſider, that God is to be *glorified* by our *Bodies*, as well as *Souls*; and that 'tis not the bare *attendance*, but the humble and good *behaviour* of our Bodies that is expected from us, they might ſoon learn *better manners* in the preſence of their Maker; which nothing can better teach them, than a publick and well-compoſed *Liturgy*.

Laſtly, That which beſt prevents *Tautologies*, vain *Repetitions*, and all other *Indecencies* in the Service of God, doth beſt preſerve the Reverence of publick Worſhip: But this is better done by a publick *Form*, than *ſudden* Effuſions, and therefore *that* muſt beſt preſerve the Reverence of publick Worſhip.

That theſe things are very offenſive unto God in our approaches to him, plainly appears by the ſharp Rebukes our *Saviour* gave the *Phariſees*, for their *much ſpeaking*, and *vain repetitions* in *Prayer*.

And that theſe and the like impertinences are incident to ſudden and unpremeditated Speech, hath been before obſerv'd; and the Experience of ſuch as uſe it, can abundantly teſtifie. For how frequent and fulſom are their Invocations of *Lord*, *Lord*, when they are at a loſs what to ſay? and how uſual is it to ſupply the defects and failures of their Invention, with taking God's Name in vain? And indeed, few can be ignorant with what nauſeous and vain Repetitions, ſuch Prayers do generally abound: Inſomuch, that after a *long extempore* Prayer, there is many times great need of a *ſhort form* to *beg Pardon* for the *rudeneſs* and *irreverence* of ſuch an Addreſs.

Now, what better Expedient can there be to prevent theſe Evils, than an eſtabliſh'd *Liturgy*; where the Tongue is *bound up* from ſuch looſe Excurſions, and kept to a more ſerious and ſolemn Method of Devotion? And therefore we have been told of *one*, who having an *extempore Prayer* taken after him in *Short-Hand*, was after preſented with a *View* of what he had offer'd up to God, and how he had entertain'd the People; the ſight

whereof fill'd him with that *bluſhing* and *confuſion* at the Impertinences and Tautologies of that exerciſe, that he reſolved never more to make ſo bold with God Almighty, and ever after betook him to a compoſed Devotion. —

But before I *diſmiſs* this Argument, I ſhall take notice of *two* or *three* great *Inconveniences*, which are known to attend *conceived* Prayers; which can only be cured by preſcribed Forms. As,

1. If he that officiates be a Perſon of *Mean parts*, that is of a *ſlow Invention*, a *bad Memory*, and an *unready Tongue*, the *Religious Exerciſe* muſt neceſſarily *partake* of *his weakneſſes*, and ſo muſt be very *lamely* and *imperfectly* perform'd; which cannot but *diſturb* the *Devotion* both of the Miniſter and People. For if he happen to *heſitate*, or expreſs himſelf in *flat*, or *phantaſtick* Terms, the Hearers, inſtead of minding the *matter*, will be obſerving the *Oddneſs* and *Emptineſs* of his *Expreſſions*: And this will cauſe *ſome* to pity his Weakneſs, *others* to condemn his Impertinence; both which muſt marr the Gravity and Solemnity of the Exerciſe. Yea ſometimes (as one hath obſerv'd) the wretched *dullneſs* of the Performance occaſions *laughter* in the Hearers: And if it be help'd out with *mimical* Tones and Geſtures, becomes rather a *Scene* of *Mirth* than *Devotion*.

This is a piece of *Irreverence* too well known in *ſome parts* of the Kingdom: Which plainly ſhews, how *unſafe* it is to *leave* the *publick Offices* of *Religion* to the *Weakneſſes* and *Imperfections* of *ſuch* Men. But then,

2. If the Miniſter be one of *better* Parts and Abilities; that is, if his *Invention* be more *quick*, his *Memory ſtrong*, and his *Tongue* more *voluble*, the People then will be apt to be taken up with the *Admiration* of his *Parts*; and inſtead of attending to the *main Duty* of Prayer, will be liſtening to the *Promptneſs* and *Readineſs* of *his Speech*; obſerving the *Method* and *Phraſes*, and pleaſing themſelves with the *Fineneſs* and *Fluency* of his *Expreſſions*. Which things may indeed gratifie the Curioſity of *itching Ears*; but never ſink into the *Heart*: They go no farther than the *Fancy*, and ſerve only to warm and deceive the *Imagination*; whilſt the Soul is no way concern'd in all this, and the Affections are call'd off from all true Devotion.

Now

Now nothing but publick prescribed *Forms*, in which neither the *Quickness* or *Slowness* of the *Minister's Parts* are to be seen, can sufficiently cure this Evil. For there the People being used to the *same* Words, suited and prepared to the Matter of their Prayers, have nothing to divert their Attention or Affections from them. Then,

Lastly, Let the Minister be a Person of never so great *Parts*, and *Piety* too, yet he must be as all Men are, liable to many *Infirmities* both of Body and Mind; which may prove great Hindrances to the Exercise of his Abilities.

He may be seiz'd with some *Indispositions* of *Body*, which may disorder his Thoughts, and marr the Fruitfulness of his Invention; and then much crude and indigested Matter, many odd and unadvised Expressions may drop from him. He may be surpriz'd with Wandrings of Mind, and Failures of Memory, that may put him to a great Loss both for Matter and Words: which yet must be supply'd, as they often are, with vain and fulsom Repetitions.

He may be disturb'd with Passion, or encumber'd with worldly Cares and Troubles: Besides many other such Accidents; which may distract his Mind, and occasion great Confusion and Irreverence in the Service of God.

Now can any considering Person think it fit, that the publick *Devotions* of a *whole Church*, should be left to the Uncertainty of *such Accidents*? Does it not become the Wisdom and Piety of our *Governours* to *provide* against *these Indecencies*? And what *other* Remedy can there be, beside a stated *Liturgy*, or *Forms* of Prayer, to secure the Worship of God from these and many other Inconveniences? Upon the whole then, let any Rational Man judge, whether an establish'd, well-compos'd *Liturgy*, wherein both the *inward* Reverence of the *Mind*, and the *outward* Reverence of the *Body* may be best taken Care of, be not a more *solemn* and *decent* way of publick Worship, than *sudden* and *conceiv'd* Prayer, wherein all things are left to the *Infirmities* and *Indiscretions* both of *Minister* and *People*?

This is what I *affirm'd* in *this place*: And must now leave it to you, impartially to *consider*, whether it be not fully *prov'd*.

And

And now having *remov'd* the great *Stumbling-block* that lay in your *way* to the *Church*, I must *exhort* you, as you tender the *Honour of God*, and your *own Salvation*, diligently and constantly to repair to it.

If the Service perform'd there, were only *Lawful*, your *Duty* to *Superiours* in all *lawful* things would *oblige* you to attend it: But having shewed it to be the most *Expedient*, the most *decent* and *devout* way of worshipping God, I hope you will make it your *choice* and your *delight* too, to resort to it; and say with *David*, *One Day in God's house is better than a thousand* other-where. Psal. 84. 10. If any of you have *wander'd* from the Fold, and walk'd in by and forbidden Paths, 'tis time for you to *return to the Shepherd and Bishop of your Souls*, and to *confess*, in the *Words* of the *Church*, that *you have erred and strayed from God's ways, like lost Sheep*: And if you have left the *publick Prayers* of *the Church*, for the *private Conceptions of Mens brain*, you have Reason to *go on*, and *say*, That you *have followed too much the Devices and Desires of your own Heart*.

Do not then withdraw from these Excellent *Prayers* and *Confessions*, which are so well *suited* to all the *Wants* and *Necessities* of your Soul: But set a due price upon this inestimable *Treasury* of *Piety* and *Devotion*; in the Use of which, you may be furnish'd with all *divine Blessings*, necessary for the *Life that now is, and that which is to come*.

In a word, Let me *prevail* with you to *frequent* the *publick Assemblies*, where *God is greatly feared* by a Religious Dread and Awfulness of *Mind*, and *had in Reverence* by the humble and decent Gestures of the *Body*, in drawing nigh to him. And thus, by *joining together* in *one Fellowship* and *Communion here on Earth*, we shall e're long be received into the ever-blessed *Society* and *Communion* of *Saints in Heaven*.

FINIS.